



*Sant Tulsi Sahib of Hathras,
India being fanned by a
young disciple by the name
of Girdhari Sahib (Girdhari
Lal). It's actually a photo of
an icon at the Samadh
(tomb) of Tulsi Sahib.*

**Maharaj Girdhari
Sahib -- The
'Unknown Guru' of
Radhasoami
History: A Spiritual
Successor of Sant
Tulsi Sahib and
Another Guru of
Soami Ji Maharaj,
by James Bean**



Photo: A satsangi affiliated with the Tulsi Sahib group and source of this photo says: "This is the image of 'Param Sant Dayal Shri 1008 Tulsi Sahib, Hathras Wale and Param Sant Dayal Shri 108 Girdhari Sahib, Wale.'" The same icon is also displayed at the Lucknow Samadh (tomb) of Maharaj Girdhari Das.

Editor's Note (from "Sach Khand Journal"):

"There has always been a great mystery surrounding Shiv Dayal Singh (the founder of Radhasoami) and the origination of his spiritual ministry. James Bean has been diligently researching the lost history of Soamiji Maharaj's reputed relationship with one of Tulsi Sahib's successors, Maharaj Girdhari Sahib. He has uncovered a very important, but mostly hidden, chapter in the evolution of Radhasoami. We are thankful for his painstaking work in this regard." (Prof. David Lane)

Link to the original version of the article published in, "Sach Khand -- The Journal of Radhasoami Studies", Prof. David Lane, MSAC Philosophy Group:

[https://docs.google.com/viewer?
a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXxzYWNoa2hhbm
Rqb3VybmFsfGd4OjJmYjRjMWIxYTc2NjQyMjQ](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXxzYWNoa2hhbmRqb3VybmFsfGd4OjJmYjRjMWIxYTc2NjQyMjQ)

For many years some scholars and others curious about Sant Mat history have been puzzled by references in Radhasoami literature to a living master that Soami Ji Maharaj associated with and apparently was very devoted to. His name was Girdhari Sahib. However, little was known about this particular Guru, or his actual status in either Tulsi Sahib or the earliest Radhasoami communities.

With the advent of the worldwide web and a growing population of English-speaking Indians getting online, including devotees of various Sant Mat centers all over India, many new avenues of information are starting to open up. It's now becoming much easier to correspond with individuals affiliated with any number of spiritual communities in the Sant Mat category that, up to now, have been considered virtually unknown in the West. Ashrams affiliated with various Guru lineages associated with Kabir, Guru Nanak, Dadu Dayal, Shri Paramhans Advait Mat, Sant Daryia Sahib of Bihar, Sant Tulsi Sahib, and a plethora of Radhasoami communities are even creating official websites and Facebook pages or groups. New books and e books are being published. Web pages containing excerpts from rare writings are appearing.

Is there evidence that Baba Girdhari Saheb was a Guru in the Tulsi Sahib community? Yes there is, and according to several different sources and independent branches of Sant Mat.

The Sant Tulsi Sahib Mandir in Hathras, and Sant Girdhari Sahib Mandir of Lucknow

From my direct correspondence with various followers affiliated with the Tulsi Sahib group, I am told that Girdhari became a spiritual successor Guru of Tulsi Sahib, founding an ashram and spiritual mission based in Lucknow known as the Sant Girdhari Sahib Mandir. I'm sure Girdhari's background was that of a sadhu like the Agra books emphasize, but clearly, he is described by the Tulsi Sahib satsang as becoming Guru successor, not just remaining sadhu, initiating representative, or elder satsangi brother. He has been referred to not only as a "Param Sant" but also with terms like "Shri", "Mahatma", "Baba", and "Maharaj" by various ashrams connected with Tulsi Sahib and Radhaswami.



Image Above: Current Gurus (2014) of Various Mandirs Associated with the Sant Tulsi Sahib Lineage

Satsangis from the Tulsi Sahib group tell me there are five major ashram centers directly associated with Tulsi Sahib, one in Hathras, one in Lucknow, and others in nearby cities. Each wali or mandir (ashram) has a line of Gurus up to the present time. I have photos of many of these Gurus, including all the recent ones.



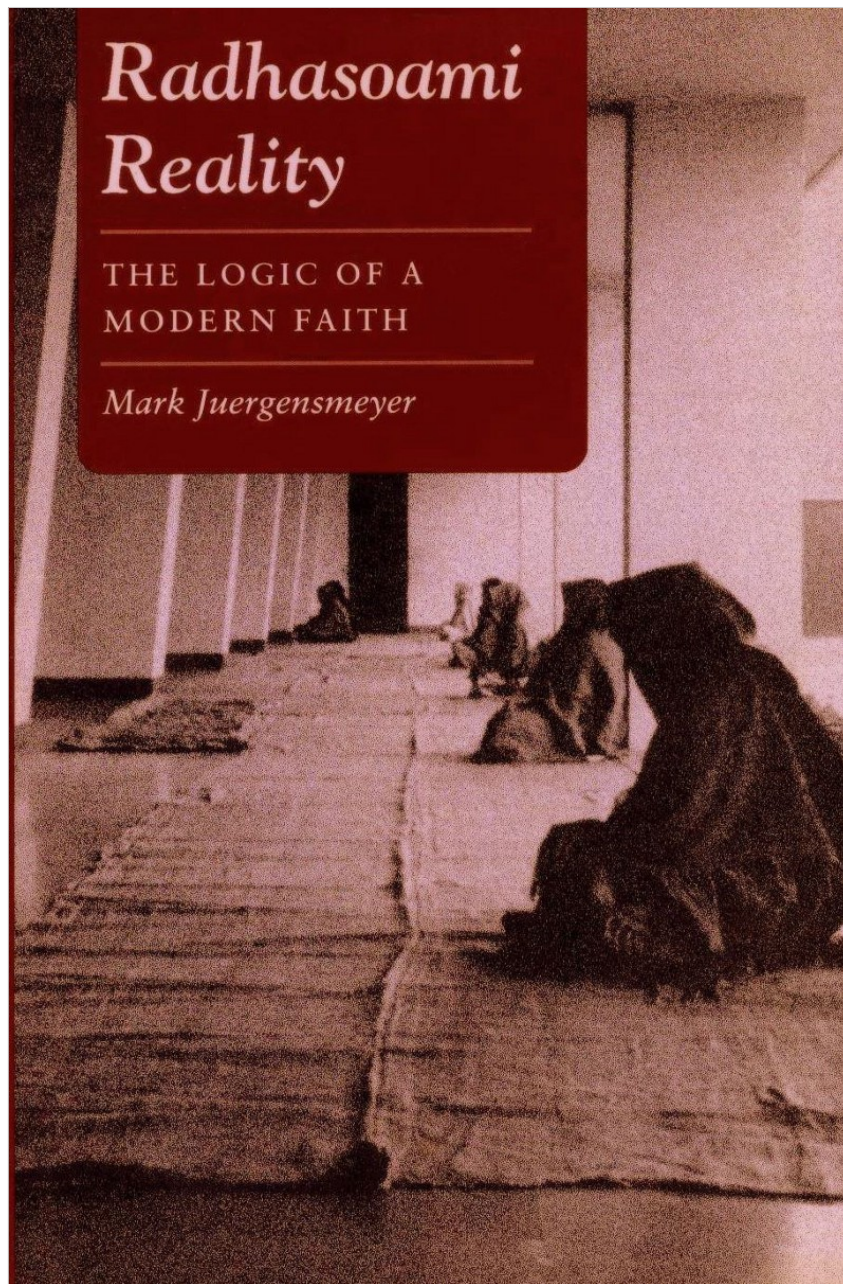
Above: Guru Dayal Das ("Mahantji")

According to some documents Dayal Bagh sent me awhile back, the Hathras Guru ("Mahantji", also known as Guru Dayal Das) attended the Spircon 2010 inter-faith Sant Mat event held in Agra. (He has since

passed on, and the current Guru at the Hathras Mandir is now Shri Missra Das.)

The understanding that Girdhari was a successor Guru in the Tulsi Sahib sangat, and that he should also be acknowledged as a Guru of Soami Ji Maharaj, is not new. Let us examine what others have already said about Maharaj Girdhari Sahib of Lucknow and Shiv Dayal Singh (Soami Ji Maharaj, Sant Radhasoami Sahib).

"Tulasi Sahib/Tulsi Sahib: A guru of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, who founded a sect known as Saheb Panth.... His chief disciples included Ramakrishna, a shepherd, Girdhari Lal, also known as Girdhari Das, and Surswami. Tulasi died in 1842 or 1843, and his disciples carried on his teachings." (the entry for 'Tulsi Sahib' in the book, "Hinduism: An Alphabetical Guide", By Roshen Dalal)



Professor Mark Juergensmeyer

Mark Juergensmeyer in, "Radhasoami Reality":
"Girdhari Das is described as being the 'chief disciple' of Tulsi Sahib, a term that would usually imply he was understood as his designated successor (Pratap Singh Seth, 'Biography of Soami Ji Maharaj', p. 108). After

Tulsi Sahib's death, Swami Shiv Dayal brought Girdhari Das into his house, 'treated him with love, and accorded him respect due to a pious Mahatma' (Pratap Singh Seth, "Biography of Soami Ji Maharaj", Soami Bagh version, p. 37).

Soami Ji Maharaj treated Girdhari Das as his Guru, as well as donated and "gave substantial material support" to his spiritual mission for "a number of years" according to, "The Biography of Soamiji Maharaj", and according to Daniel Gold in, "The Lord As Guru: Hindi Sants in the North Indian Tradition". There is also another source, which we will explore in detail below, that confirms Soami Ji Maharaj attended the satsang of Maharaj Girdhari Sahib "for a very long period of time."

Agra Branches of Radhasoami

There are a few different documents from Agra Radhasoami sources that describe Girdhari Das as "chief disciple of Tulsi Sahab". In the sangat or spiritual community founded by Sant Tulsi Sahib we know there were several Gurus to choose from after Tulsi Sahib's passing. For the Radhasoami literature to preserve the understanding that Baba Girdhari Sahib in particular was the "chief disciple" of Tulsi Sahib, this likely reflects Soami Ji's own view of him. Of course Soami Ji may also have revered other Gurus too, such as Surswami, who was the next Guru at the ashram in Hathras (not Soami Ji at the time!), but

Baba Girdhari Sahib is the Guru that Soami Ji supported and spent time with, and only he is specifically named, and described as “chief disciple” in the writings published by various Radhasoami groups.

According to the “Biography of Babuji Maharaj” (Madhav Prasad Sinha), Soami Ji Maharaj used to treat “Baba Girdhari Das Ji”, who was one of the “chief disciples of Sahebji or Tulsi Saheb of Hathras”, as Guru.

In the “Biography of Soamiji Maharaj”, by Lala Pratap Singh Seth, we read: “Girdhari Das Ji was one of the Sadhus who were followers of Tulsi Saheb. He was a great devotee and Abhyasi. Soamiji Maharaj treated him with love, and accorded him respect due to a pious Mahatma. For a number of years, Soami Ji lodged him in one of His houses and supplied him food, clothing, etc....”

The “Biography of Soamiji Maharaj” mentions the city of Lucknow as being the location where Girdhari spent most of his time, and when Girdhari was about to pass away, Soamiji traveled to Lucknow to be with him, and spent time with him in intense meditation. “Both the female disciples of Girdhari Das Ji came running to Soamiji Maharaj and requested him to save his Guru.” (“Biography of Babuji Maharaj”, page 376) There is even a story told that Soami Ji helped Girdhari, at death’s door, to reconnect with the Sound Current, thus postponing his death briefly. (There is a

belief in Sant Mat that at the time of death the Sound Current, like the soul, begins to withdraw from the body.)

Some interested in the history of Sant Mat find it to not be a coincidence that only after Baba Girdhari Sahib left the scene did Soami Ji Maharaj officially and openly began his own spiritual mission based in Agra, and soon thereafter began holding a public satsang (in 1861).

(Another Guru was next in line at the ashram in Lucknow after Girdhari's death. From correspondence with satsangis affiliated with the Lucknow Ashram I am informed that this is the list of their Gurus -- the Lucknow Mandir lineage: "Shri Girdhari Saheb -- Shri Dihal Saheb -- Shri Seva Saheb -- and at present Shri Haricharan Saheb" is the living teacher at the Sant Girdhari Mandir in Lucknow.)

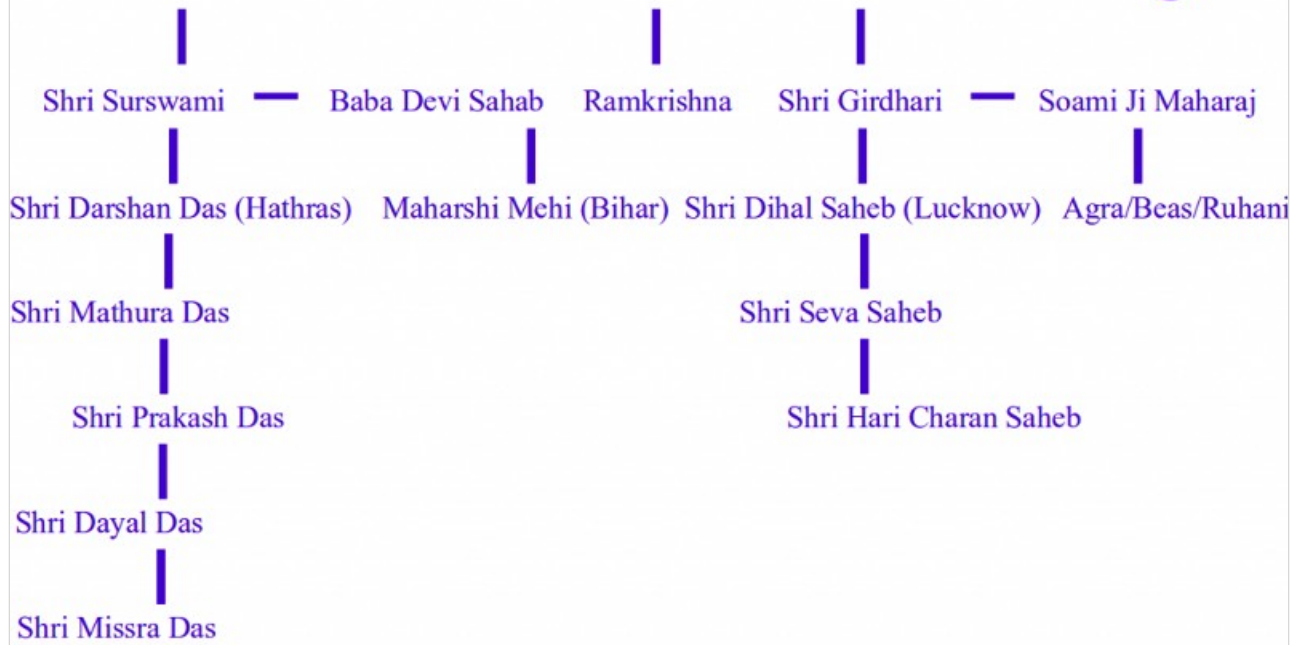
Professor David Lane, Aaron Talsky, Harasvarupa Mathura, and More from Daniel Gold

David Lane in, *The Radhasoami Tradition* writes: "Historically, it would be interesting to find out when Girdhari Das passed away... [*NOTE: The Girdhari Das -- Shiv Dayal Singh connection, though rarely if ever mentioned by Sant mat historians, has not escaped the watchful eye of Radhasoami's two youngest scholars Daniel Gold and Aaron Talsky. As Talsky speculates, 'A provocative possibility is that

Shiv Dayal did not begin his public ministry during this interval [1843-1861] either because he was sensitive to the status of Girdhari Das as a reputed successor to Tulsi Sahib or indeed followed the latter in some way. We can discover that the two had a close relationship: see Chachaji's brief description of this relationship [Biography of Soamiji Maharaj], pages 37-39. More enlightening, perhaps, is the fact that Chachaji's narration of the inauguration of public satsang in 1861 immediately follows his description of the death of Girdhari. Finally, the Tulsi (or "Sahib") panth which developed after the death of the Hathras Sant asserts not only that Soamiji venerated Girdhari, but sometimes that he actually received his updesha [instruction] from this source. See Harasvarupa Mathura, Bharatiya Sadhana Aura Santa Tulsi, op. cit., pages 416-417." [Aaron Talsky, The Radhasoami Tradition, op. cit., pages 138-139. Daniel Gold in "Lord as Guru" , op. cit. (page 229), also mentions the Girdhari Das -- Shiv Dayal Singh connection. *]" ("The Radhasoami Tradition, A Critical History of Guru Succession", Garland Publishing, 1992)

*[The information mentioned above about Soami Jivenerating Girdhari and receiving spiritual instruction from him cited by Aaron Talsky comes from a Hindi book by **Harasvarupa Mathura** called, "**Bharatiya Aadhana Aura Santa Tulasi: Tulasi Sahaba ki Jivani, Racanaom Aura Pantha ka Vivecanatmaka Adhyayana**", published by **Kanapura: Sahitya Niketana, 1965.**]*

Sant Tulsi Sahib of Hathras Lineages



The Exact Death-Date For Sant Girdhari and What It Reveals

I recently asked some disciples of the Lucknow satsang for the date of Girdhari's passing, a very important day for them, which they remember each year. This is the date they gave me. The exact death-date for Maharaj Girdhari Sahib according to the Hindu calendar is Vikram Samvat 1917 Shravan Shukla Saptami, which translates into August, 1860.

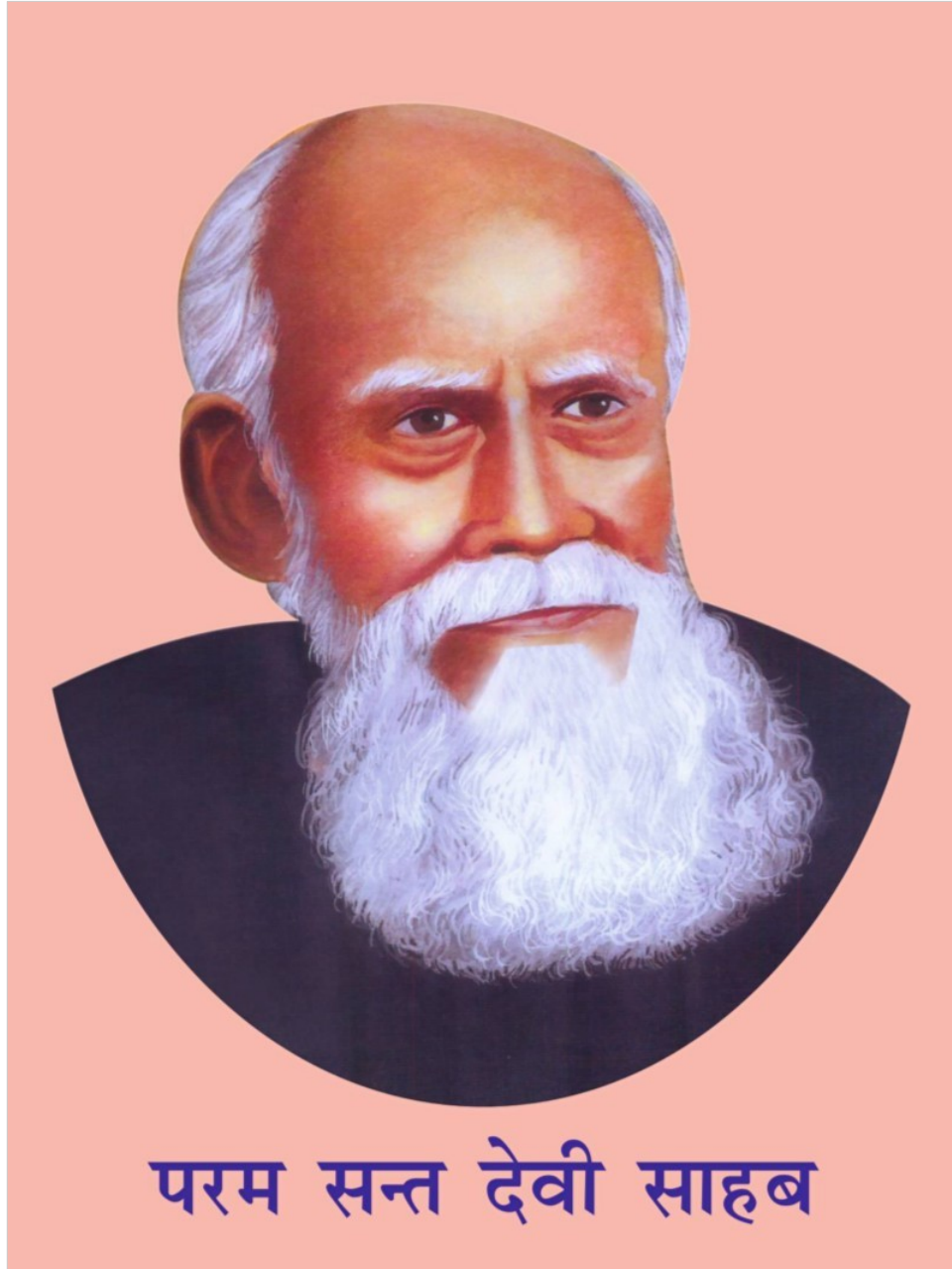
This date also coincides with Tulsi Das Jayati (commemoration of the birthday of Sant Tulsi Das). The day on our calendar would vary each year from a day in late July to sometime in mid August.

Only a few months/weeks later during the same year, according to their calendar: Vikram Samvat 1917 (on Vasant Panchami Day: Feb. 15th 1861), is when Soami Ji Maharaj began his public mission and open satsang in Agra. During that same period, Girdhari's successor in Lucknow, Shri Dihal Saheb, began his ministry as Guru at the Lucknow Mandir. What had been the one Tulsi Sahib group associated with Girdhari, with a satsang in Agra and one in Lucknow, became two groups: one branch continuing in Lucknow headed by Shri Dihal Saheb, and the other one based in Agra lead by Soami Ji Maharaj (Sant Radhasoami Sahib) eventually becoming known as the Radhasoami Satsang.

Huzur Maharaj Rai Salig Ram (Close Disciple of Soami Ji Maharaj), Baba Devi Sahab and Maharshi Mehi Ashram

This association of Shiv Dayal Singh/Sant Radhasoami Sahib with "Param Sant Dayal Shri 108 Girdhari Sahib" is now independently corroborated by yet another source -- another branch of Sant Mat. The following is from, "The Biography of Baba Devi Sahab", published by the Maharshi Mehi Ashram, located at Kuppaghat, Bhagalpur, in Bihar, connected with the lineage of Baba Devi Sahab and Maharshi Mehi Paramhans. In other words, they are not affiliated with the Girdhari Sahib Ashram in Lucknow. They barely have any knowledge of the existence of

the Lucknow group, but fortunately their history has preserved some vitally important evidence.

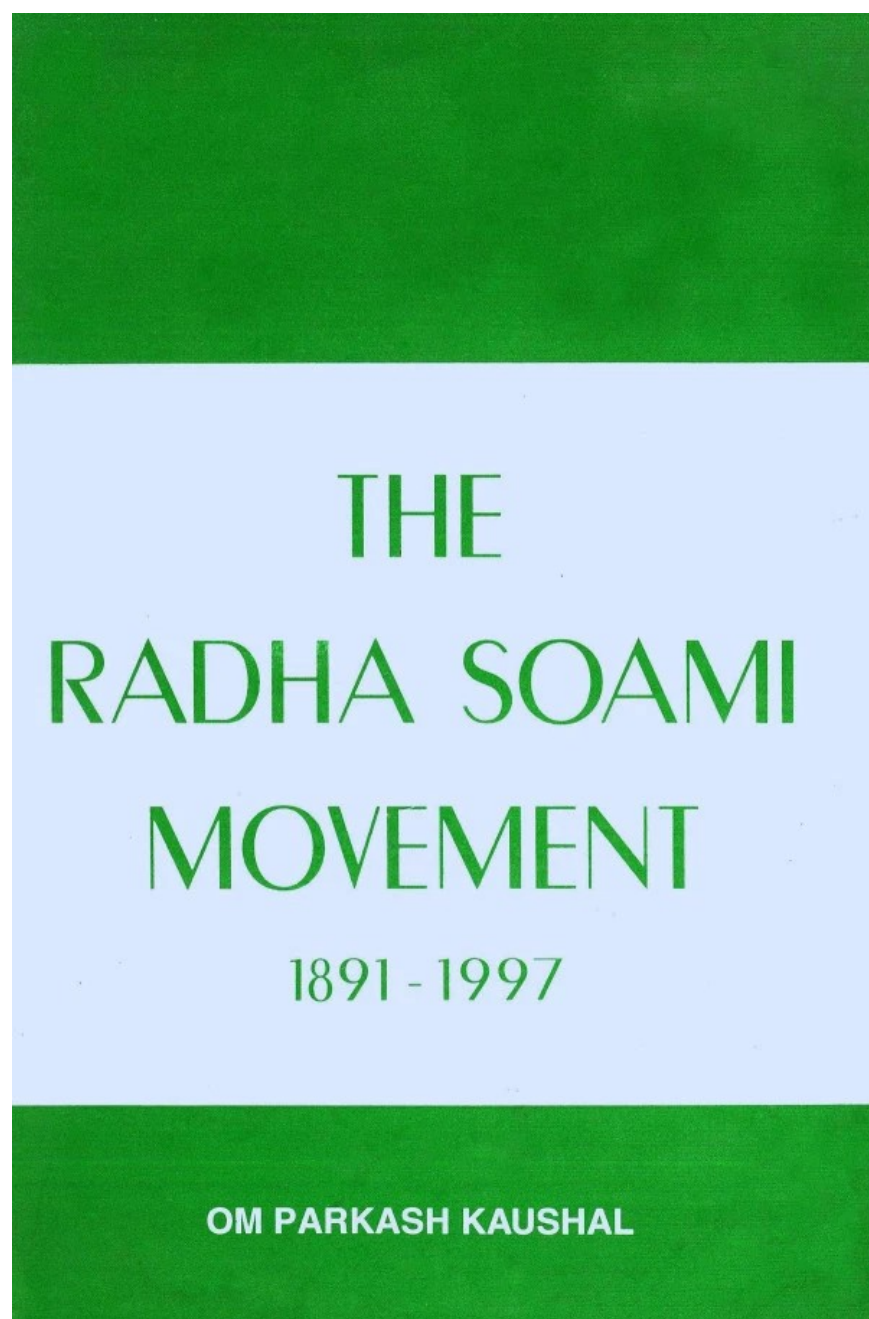


Baba Devi Sahab of Hathras—spent some time in Agra as Huzur Maharaj’s guest, before establishing his own spiritual mission and ashram in Moradabad

Baba Devi Sahib, the devotee who would eventually publish the “Ghat Ramayan” of Tulsi Sahib, “blessed” as an infant by Tulsi Sahib, who predicted he would become a great saint (reminding one of Soami Ji being blessed in a similar fashion by Tulsi), and grew up in the Hathras community presided over by Surswami. As an adult he eventually spent some time in Agra. He was close friends with a Radhaswami devotee by the name of Padma Das, who invited him to the Radhasoami Satsang in Agra, where Padma Das introduced him to Rai Saligram (“Shaligram”), who became Guru there after the time of Soami Ji Maharaj:

"Padma Das took Baba Devi to Rai Bahadur Shaligram's Satsang. There, Padma Das narrated to Shaligram Sahab about his (Baba Devi's) story -- his intensified devotion from the childhood, demise of parents in very short [young] age, his firm determination and increasing intuition to spend his life as Yogi in a lonely place. Hearing all of these, Rai Sahab asked Baba Devi, 'Do you know the method of meditation which you want to practice in a secluded place?' 'Yes' -- Baba Devi replied humbly. Then Shaligram Sahab asked, 'From where you have got it?' Baba Devi told, 'I am disciple of Sant Tulsi Sahab and he himself has blessed me.' Then Shaligram Sahab became very glad to hear it and told [Baba Devi] that 'you were the member of my own family because, Sant Tulsi Sahib was my most reverend.' Rai Sahab further explained about the association of his Guru (master), Shiv Dayal Swami Ji and Sant Tulsi

Sahab's disciple Giridhari Das. He disclosed that his Guru Shiv Dayal ji used to tell that he (Shiv Dayal) had been greatly benefited with the association of Baba Giridhari Das, a disciple of Sant Tulsi Sahab." ("The Biography of Baba Devi Sahab", excerpted in English at the SadguruMehi website on a web page titled, "Life And Teachings of Baba Devi Sahab").



The Research of Professor Parshuram Chaturvedi and Om Parkash Kaushal

As I mentioned above, Aaron Talsky sites the research of the Indian scholar Harasvarupa Mathura—his Hindi book, “Bharatiya Aadhana Aura Santa Tulasi: Tulasi Sahaba ki Jivani”. According to Mathura, the guru Soami Ji Maharaj was devoted to was Sant Girdhari Sahib, a spiritual successor of Sant Tulsi Sahib. And now, thanks to Issue #10 of David Lane’s e-magazine, “Sach Khand—The Journal of Radhasoami Studies,” we learn of Om Parkash Kaushal’s book, “The Radhasoami Movement”.

In his review, Professor Lane writes: “On Shiv Dayal Singh: Kaushal presents a short discussion over the issue of who was Shiv Dayal Singh’s guru, eventually siding with Beas’ viewpoint that it was Tulsi Sahib of Hathras. But in a pregnant citation, Om Parkash Kaushal writes, “Parshuram Chaturvedi [author of the magisterial Uttari Bharat Ki Sant Parampara] is of the opinion that ‘Shiv Dayal took initiation from Baba Girdhari Dass, a disciple of Tulsi Sahib of Hathras.’” Given Chaturvedi’s very scholarly reputation and his vast erudition on the subject, his opinion adds more kindling to James Bean’s important research in this area (see the special issue of Sach Khand devoted to Bean’s work [see, “Sach Khand”, Issue #9]).” (“Sach Khand”, Issue #10)

Indeed. Most of the historic record about the life of Soami Ji Maharaj (Shiv Dayal) is preserved in Hindi, and little has become available to us in English. For these scholars to have found multiple and convincing accounts of Soami Ji being closely affiliated with a living master back then by the name of Girdhari Sahib—this is rather significant. Given this association, Parshuram Chaturvedi even assumed Soami Ji was initiated by Girdhari. And it is rather interesting that Huzur Maharaj Rai Saligram in the above conversation with Baba Devi Sahab about Soami Ji, Tulsi Sahib, and Girdhari, seems to focus primarily on the role of Girdhari. Perhaps from the perspective of Saligram it had been many years since Tulsi left the scene, and that’s why. Maybe? In any case, I do side with those that believe Sant Tulsi Sahib is the primary and initiating guru of Soami Ji. As Om Parkash Kaushal writes: “They [the parents of Seth Shiv Dayal Singh] were the followers of Sant Tulsi Sahib of Hathras. Thus the family guru can be the guru of the child.” (“The Radhasoami Movement”, page 24)

In the Tulsi Sahib branch of Sant Mat there are two initiations. The first initiation is into the meditation practices of simran/manas jap, manas dhyan, and drishti sadhana (Inner Light Meditation). After the student-disciple is “established in the experience of Inner Light”, then at some point there is given the second initiation, which is into the practice of surat shabd yoga (Inner Sound Meditation). Even if Girdhari Sahib was the person imparting or conveying

the meditation instructions on both occasions to Soami Ji, the timeline suggests it would have been with the blessings and authority of Tulsi Sahib, and Soami Ji would have regarded Tulsi as his initiating guru.

What has come to light with these various accounts (above and below) and is “new”, at least for most, is Soami Ji’s close affiliation with Sant Girdhari Sahib after the departure of Sant Tulsi Sahib. For Soami Ji, Girdhari was the next guru in the lineage, and Girdhari was given by Soami Ji Maharaj all the respect of a competent living master and spiritual successor.



Swami Ji Maharaj (pictured above) -- Saving the Best For Last -- Now, Let's Travel A Bit Further Back in Time

In the Sar Bachan Radhasoami Poetry (Sar Bachan Radhasoami Nazm yaani Chhand bandh) of Soami Ji Maharaj is a very important lengthy section, Bachan/Discourse 21, a kind of “book within the book” called 'Hidayat Namah' ('Esoteric Instructions'), going into detail about the soul travel or heavenly ascents of Soami Ji Maharaj. It represents the heart of this essential holy book of the Radhasoami Faith. Here Soami Ji provides the following description (7-8):

“Beyond this, there are innumerable palaces made of crystal (sheesh mehal) and diverse spirits inhabit them and are settled there in accordance with the allotments made by the Lord, and they see the peculiar mutual display which is so blissful, and in turn they also establish their own plays and sports. In Hindi, these spirits are described as ‘circles of hamsas’ (purified spirits). The engravings and the designs carved in these spheres are to be seen in order to be believed. The entire dispensation and workshop there is purely spiritual; it is not at all gross or material.

“Spirits dwelling there are characterized by excessive delicacy, subtlety, refinedness and purity; they don't have a trace of physical coarseness (kasaafat) and

impurity. The details of this sphere are known only to the faqirs. [‘Full particulars of these regions are known only to Sants’ -- Maheshwari translation.] To unfold more about it is not proper and advisable. ***For a long time the spirit of this faqir (i.e. Soamiji Maharaj Himself) sauntered and stayed there and then under instructions from the Teachers and Guides, moved ahead.***

8. “Moving on and on, the spirit soared up about 5 arab (1 arab = 1 billion) and 75 crores (1 crore = 10 million) jojans (really incalculable height) and broke into the realm of Hahoot or Mahasunn (in Sar Bachan, Prose, Part I, para 13, the word Hahoot is used for Sunn, and not Mahasunn) and sauntered around it. How shall I describe it? For ten billion miles (again, incalculable distance) there is utter darkness. How shall I describe its depth, except to say that for one kharab (1 kharab = 100 billion, i.e. incalculable extent) jojans, the soul descended and yet its bottom could not be discovered; then again it reversed and turned upward, and ***following the track pointed by the sages, the spirit treaded that path*** and then it was deemed improper to determine and find out the depth of this dark region.

"The surat then moved on..."

(“The Quintessential Discourse Radhasoami” (Sar Bachan Radhasoami, Poetry), Volume I, Translation by M. G. Gupta, M.A., D.Litt. Former Member of the

Faculty of Political Science, Allahabad University, MG
Publishers, and Huma Books, Agra)

Take note of this particular sentence above by Soami Ji: *“For a long time the spirit of this faqir (i.e. Soamiji Maharaj Himself) sauntered and stayed there and then under instructions from **the Teachers and Guides**, moved ahead.”*

In the Sar Bachan words like ‘Murshida’ and ‘Guru’ are translated as “Master”, “Guide”, or “Teacher”, but here we have Teachers, Guides.... in other words, a plural form of Murshida/Mursheed/Guru -- not just one Teacher or one Guide: “Having sojourned there and having enjoyed the glory thereof for a very long time, the spirit of this Faqir moved on, **in accordance with the instructions of the Guides.**” In a plural form is how it’s also rendered according to another translation by S.D. Maheshwari, “Sar Bachan Radhasoami Poetry”, Part 1, Agra.

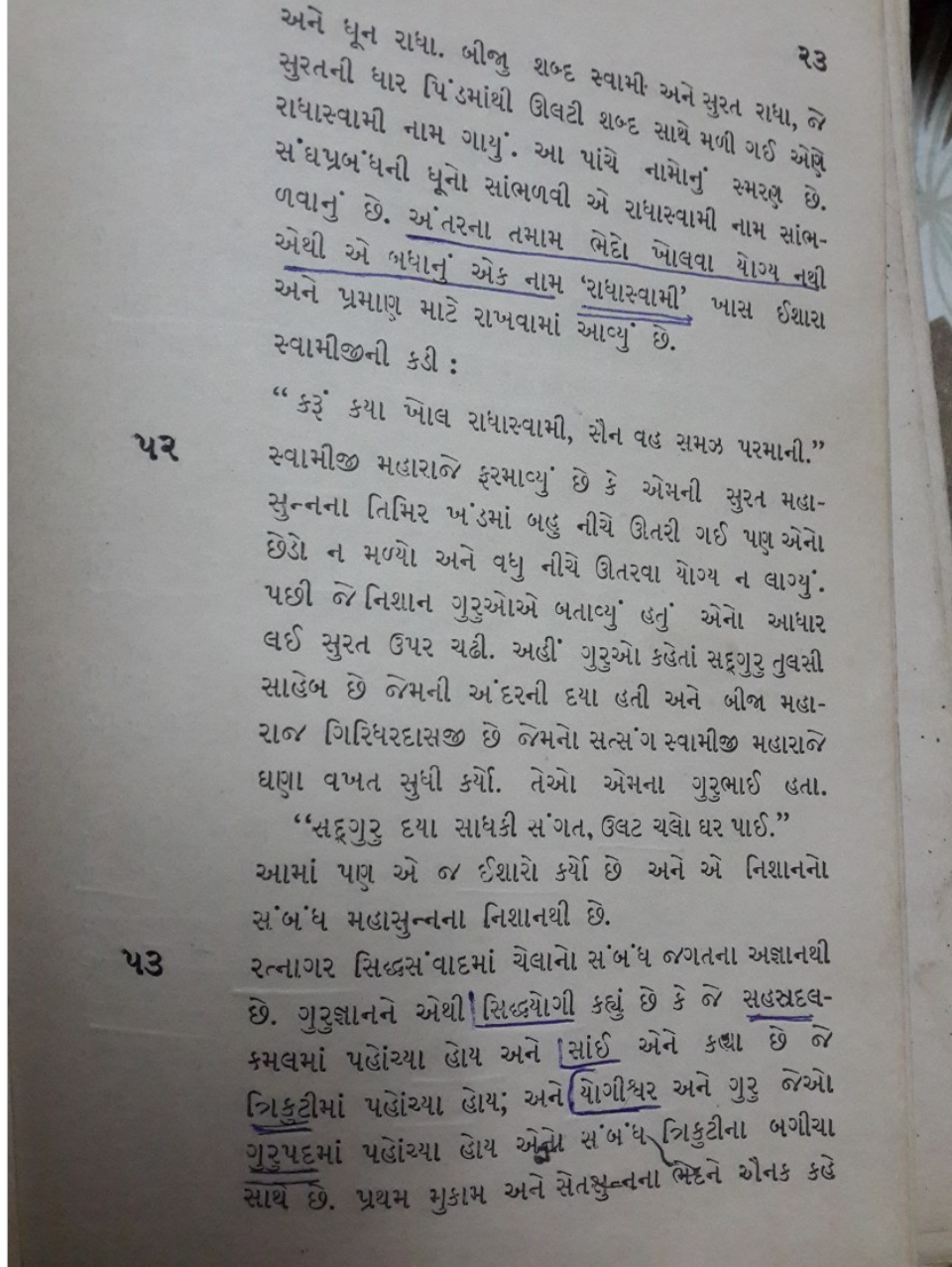


Photo Above: The page from Sant Gharib Das's book, "Anmol Bachan", mentioning that Soami Ji Maharaj's Sar Bachan refers to Soami Ji as having **two Gurus**: Sant Tulsi Sahib, and his successor Maharaj Girdhari Sahib.

Sant Gharib Das, Another Close Disciple in the Inner Circle of Soami Ji -- The Book of "Anmol Bachan" (Sometimes Spelled "Vachan")

Sant Gharib Das commented on the above verses of Soami Ji's Sar Bachan Poetry and provides us with more evidence about Girdhari Sahib, settling the matter once-and-for-all.

"Soamiji in his Discourses has said that his surat descended into the dark regions of Mahasunn but could neither locate the bottom or the end of it nor did it feel it worthwhile to go down any further.

Thereafter, ***his surat adhering to the signs as revealed to him by his Gurus ascended upwards.*** Here Soamiji says that it was the inner Mercy of his Satguru Tulsi Saheb and that of Maharaj Girdhari Das Ji whose Satsang he attended for a very long period of time."

Both Sant Tulsi Sahib and "Maharaj" Girdhari Sahib were Gurus of Soami Ji Maharaj. Both provided Soami Ji with inner Grace, helping to guide him during his inward journey, as described in the passages above. He was a disciple of them both, on good terms with them both right up till the end of their lives, by all accounts.

I now have three different translations of this key definitive paragraph above from Gharib Das. I wanted

to make sure the word “**Gurus**” (**plural**) is really there in the original and is a solid translation.

Actually the paragraph above from Gharib Das, plus the two translations into English of the Sar Bachan verses of Soami Ji all come from sources in Agra that do not have a personal view of history and theology suggesting to them anything about Soami Ji having one Guru, much less two Gurus, yet, to their credit, that’s how all three chose to translate those passages.

“Anmon Bachan” is a book of questions and answers by Sant Garib Das Saheb, close disciple of Soami Ji Maharaj/Shiv Dayal Singh, and eventual founder of the Radhaswami Spiritual Science, Radhasoami Satsang, Sarai Rohilla, Delhi. This old out-of-print book, passed on from one generation to the next, has traveled quite far to reach me. Just to know about the existence of this book, locate someone with a copy, see some pages from it, and then getting some translations made from Gujarati into English, and Hindi into English, is no easy task, beating some ridiculous odds. For this I am grateful to those involved.

**This is from the book -- a very rough translation
of this part for now:**

"Brief Life Summary:

"Birth date as per Hindu calendar is the third day of
Sudh period of the Vaishakh month in the year 1900
(Samvant year, not Western calendar), [1846 AD];

"Place of birth: Patiala;
Family: in khatri caste;

"Birth name: Narayan Das;

"At the age of nine he left home accompanied by a
Siddha Yogishwara for seven years, spent time in the
cave at Markand Hill in Kashmir; practiced the
inward journey and reached Trikuti, Dasam Dwaar
(the Tenth Gate);

"After that in 1931 [AD 1874] he came to Swami Shiv
Dayal Singh and reached Sat Lok and Anami Lok;

"He stayed in Hathras and Delhi, did discourses
[spread the teachings] for around thirty eight years
and initiated around 5,000 people. Then he left the
body on the nineth day of Vad period of Kartik month
in 1974 [1918 AD]."

It says Gharib Das spent some time in Hathras. Makes sense he would be less susceptible to denying (or spinning/minimizing) the connection between Sant Tulsi Sahib, Maharaj Girdhari Das and Soami Ji given his association with Soami Ji and apparent knowledge of the Tulsi Sahib community.

More about Sant Gharib Das: "GARIB DAS JI OR GHARIB DAS JI—A disciple of Swami Ji, who reached Sach Khand during his lifetime. He was from the Punjab and a brother disciple of Baba Ji. Though a Saint of the Punjab, he preached Sant Mat in Delhi, where he had some followers. Huzur Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji had a high regard for him." (Jaimal Singh - "Spiritual Letters", RS Books)

"Although the disciples of Swami Ji Maharaj reached to thousands in number, yet three of them were most prominent. They were Rai Bahadur Saligram at Agra, Baba Garib Das of Delhi, and Maharaj Baba Jaimal Singh Ji in the Punjab." (Jaimal Singh - "Spiritual Letters", RS Books)

As an independent witness representing another distinct branch of Radhasoami and a prominent disciple of Shiv Dayal Singh, Gharib Das of the Radhasoami Satsang, Sarai Rohilla, Delhi, is a priceless resource for helping to clarify many issues about early Radhasoami history. Hopefully the whole book can be translated and published. I suspect if it

is, it will help promote reconciliation and harmony between different branches of the Radhasoami Faith, between those who follow Panch Naam and those who follow Simran of Radhasoami.

Quick Observation: The passages from Gharib Das and successors (see, “The Way Out Is IN”, by Swami Ram Behari Lal, Radhaswami Satsang, Sarai Rohilla) so far don’t lend support to the belief that Sar Bachan Poetry is mostly a redacted work of Saligram, which is a theory put forward by some. Gharib Das seems to have been reading the same familiar Sar Bachan Poetry, including the teaching about Radhasoami Naam. He said, “The Word is Soami and Surat is Radha, and this dhar of surat that turns back and merges into the Shabd (Word) sings ‘Radhasoami’. When you sing the name ‘Radhasoami’, you do the sumiran of the ‘Five Names’.” (“Anmol Bachan”)



Sant Tulsi Sahib of Hathras

Summary -- Conclusion

There was the one Sant Mat group founded by Sant Tulsi Sahib, with branches in Hathras, Agra, Lucknow, and several other cities. Soamiji and Radhaji were part of it, as were their families and extended families.

Here's the context of the Agra satsang that Soami Ji came to eventually lead: "Gradually, Tulsi Sahab attracted a large number of followers and disciples from among the high caste Brahmins as well as the low caste Sudras. They came from the poor classes, as also from the affluent. He used to visit towns and cities in U.P. and among his disciples were Seth Dilwali Singh Sahab of Agra [Soami Ji's father], his wife Mahamaya, his mother, his mother in-law and sister. They were all keen disciples of Tulsi Sahab. He used to pay visits to them in Agra, stay in their home in Panni Gali, and hold satsangs there." (Entry for Param Sant Tulsi Sahib in, "Radhasoami White Paper on the Religion of Sants and RadhaSoami Faith", published by Dayal Bagh in Agra)

Maharaj Girdhari Sahib also was originally part of the Agra Satsang, spending some time there. (Pratap Singh Seth, "Biography of Soami Ji Maharaj", p. 37).

I do agree with those accounts that describe Soami Ji as being initiated at a young age by Sant Tulsi Sahib, and no doubt Soami Ji did regard Sant Tulsi as his

primary initiating Guru, as evidenced by the Guru Bhakti contents of his Sar Bachan.

While there is no evidence that Sant Tulsi Sahib appointed Soami Ji to immediately assume the gaddi in the Tulsi Sahib community back in 1843 at the time of Tulsi Sahib's passing, and there's no record of that occurring, Soami Ji certainly was held in high regard, and did begin to prepare for his eventual spiritual mission. According to the sources we have, Soami Ji spent between fifteen and seventeen years leading a contemplative lifestyle, devoting much time to meditation in a special room within his home in Agra.

Soami Ji never cut himself off from the Tulsi Sahib community he had been part of all his life however. During this same period between the death of Sant Tulsi in 1843 and the beginning of the Radhasoami Satsang in 1861, Soami Ji not only devoted time to meditation but also remained affiliated with the Tulsi Sahib community, according to several independent Sant Mat and Radhasoami sources documented above, associating with Maharaj Girdhari Sahib, "venerating" him as a Sant, attending his satsang, receiving instruction and guidance ("updes") from him, doing seva, initiating a few people in Agra as far back as the mid 1850's, being quite involved in both Agra and Lucknow satsangs.

An older Guru grooming a younger one, granting him permission to initiate, and helping him to become an established successor presiding over his own satsang

or ashram, even before the death of the elder Guru, is actually quite common, and in harmony with Sant Mat principals. I know of several examples of this in Sant Mat history. I even know of contemporary living masters alive right now that began their spiritual mission many years BEFORE the death of the Gurus that appointed and mentored them. What we find if we examine the life of Soami Ji and his transition to becoming Guru, is that it was quite normal and routine, the way it's often done, especially in the community founded by Sant Tulsi Sahib of Hathras.

The references to Soami Ji having two Gurus, venerating Girdhari, valuing his teachings/updesh, being guided in higher planes (“regions known only to Sants” -- Sar Bachan), being part of his satsang for all of those years, donating/supporting, doing seva for his cause, treating him as Guru, only beginning his own public mission right after the death of Girdhari, etc.... in my view strongly indicates that Soami Ji could only have seen him as a Sant, a.k.a. master or worthy successor of Tulsi Sahib. After that successor passed on is when Soami Ji Maharaj officially began his own open satsang and full-time open-to-the-public mission (as of 1861) in the city of Agra.

For these reasons I believe an honest response to the evidence by those committed to the truthfulness and accuracy of Sant Mat history should be a willingness to recognize Maharaj Girdhari Sahib as the Guru occupying that time period between Sant Tulsi Sahib and Soami Ji

Maharaj. He should no longer be omitted, nor should Tulsi Sahib be omitted. Whatever one's view of Soami Ji might be: Incarnation of Radhasoami, Svateh Sant (born Saint) or some other point of view, making this correction to the history books represents no diminishing of that legacy. At this late date, those claiming succession from Soami Ji Maharaj (Sant Radhasoami Sahib) may have little knowledge about this obscure Guru of the past that Soami Ji held in such high regard, but should at the very least defer to Soami Ji on this point!

During the period of time between the passing of Sant Tulsi Sahib in 1843 and the passing of Maharaj Girdhari Sahib of Lucknow in August of 1860, the seventeen year period, in addition to doing much meditation, Soamiji also was allied with, attended and supported the satsang of Sant Girdhari Sahib. Soamiji's other home in Lucknow

served as the headquarters of the Sant Mat satsang mission there.

RUMI's Ode to the Unknown Mursheeds, Sages and Guides

"In every age, God's mercy and pleasure graces their (Saints') pure spirit and breath. The names of lakhs of (cloistered, secluded, hidden) majestic spiritual personages (Saints) whose heads are adorned and distinguished by His grace have remained unknown and unsung because they were the cynosure of God who (must have) felt envious of their spiritual grandeur (and chose to keep them obscure and unhonoured as obscure heroes are unsung)." ("Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi", Volume Two, M.G. Gupta Translation, Huma Books, Agra)



*Upper Right: Sant Tulsi Sahib; Upper Left: Surswami;
Lower Right: Shri Prakash Das; Lower
Left: Guru Dayal (Mahantji)*

